

furnished a clerical ticket to the connubial isles of the blest. The shop-girl, the lady's maid, the hammock-swinging dame, and even the college boy and girl swelled the ranks of her readers." All this castigation of a writer whom most people read with pleasure, who never wrote a really sensational novel or a re-

motely unwholesome one, who is full of gayety and lightness, whose pathos and sentiment, though a little obvious to us, exactly hit the taste of her age—and when *Peg O My Heart*, the precise theatrical counterpart of *The Duchess*, has been for two years considered the most charming play in New York.

## WHO IS THE MAN?

BY W. L. GEORGE

AND so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe, and then from hour to hour we rot and rot. A gloomy saying, but one which applies to men as well as to empires, and to none, perhaps, more than to those men who stand in the vanguard of literature. Of very few writers, save those who were so fortunate as to be carried away by death in the plenitude of their powers (unless, like Mr. Thomas Hardy, they drew back from the battle of letters) can it be said that the works of their later years were equal to those of their maturity. The great man has his heir in the world, one who is impatiently waiting for his shoes and assured that he will fill them. It is well so, for shoes must be filled, and it is good to know in advance who is the young giant who will one day make the sacred footprints on the sands of time.

Who are these men? Is it possible already to designate them? To mark out the Hardy or the Meredith of to-morrow? The Bennett, the Wells or the Galsworthy? It is difficult. The writer will not be surprised if some quarrel with these names, cavil at his selection and challenge a greatness which they look upon as transient. Those critics may be right. The writer does not, in this article, attempt a valuation of those whom he will call the literary novelists, that is to say, the men who have "somehow," and owing to hardly ascertained causes, won their way into the front rank of modern English letters. It may

be urged that these are not our big men, and that the brazen blaring of popular trumpets has drowned the blithe piping of tenderer songsters. But, if we view facts sanely, we must all agree that there are in England six men, of whom one American, who hold without challenge the premier position among novelists: Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. Joseph Conrad, Mr. John Galsworthy, Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. Henry James, and Mr. H. G. Wells. Theirs is a special position: there is not one of them, probably, whose sales would create envy in the bosom of Mr. Charles Garvice or of Mrs. Barclay; nor are they of the super-hyper class whose works are issued in wisely limited editions and printed in over-beautiful type. They are, in a very rough way, the men of their time and, a very little, the men of all time. Whatever be their greatness or their littleness, they are the men who will, for the University Extension lecturer of 1950, represent the English novel in a given period; they are not the most literary of their contemporaries; they have not more ideas than some of their contemporaries, and all of them have their faults, their mannerisms and their lapses, but yet, in a rough and general way, these six men combine more ideas with more style than any who are beyond their group. "Somehow" they stand at the head, and the writer makes no attempt to criticise them, to class them: he has even named them in alphabetical order.

Now not one of these men is under forty; two of them are over seventy; one approaches sixty. They must be replaced. Not yet, of-course, though some of the young begin, a little rashly, to cast stones at those mature glories. But still, some time, faced as we are with a horde of novelists, not less in these islands than fifteen hundred, we must ask ourselves: Who are the young men who rear their heads above the common rank? Which ones among them are likely to inherit the purple?

## II

In such an examination we must not ask for achievement, for by young men is meant those who have not passed, or have but lately passed thirty. That they should show promise at all is remarkable enough, and distinguishes them from their forbears: while Mr. Bennett, Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Conrad published no novel at all before they were thirty, and Mr. Wells not much more than a fantastic romance, the young men of to-day tell a different tale. Mr. J. D. Beresford, Mr. Gilbert Cannan, Mr. E. M. Forster, Mr. D. H. Lawrence, Mr. Compton Mackenzie, Mr. Oliver Onions, Mr. Frank Swinnerton, are a brilliant little stable, and have mostly tried their paces many years earlier; theirs have been the novels of the twenty-eight-year-old, in one case, at least, that of the twenty-six-year-old. They have affirmed themselves earlier than did their seniors and yet quite definitely.

The short list defies challenge, even though some may wish to include an obscurer favourite, some other young, intellectual novelist or a more specialised man, such as Mr. Algernon Blackwood, or Mr. James Stephens; still the classification is a very general one, it is almost undeniable that those are the men among whom will be recruited the leaders of to-morrow. Indeed, the writer has neglected some aspirants, relegated them into a class which will, in a few years, give us the inheritors of certain men of high literary quality who, owing to accident, to style, or to choice of subject,

have not laid hands upon literary crowns. But that is inevitable. The seven men selected are those who show promise.

By promise is meant a suggestion that the young man will become a big man, that is to say that, in ten years or so, he will be the vehicle of the modern idea through the style of the time; he may not be very popular, but he will not be unpopular; he will be quoted, criticised, discussed; briefly, he will matter. Now the writer does not suggest that the seven men named will inevitably become big men. There is not room for seven big novelists, but it is among them that, in all likelihood, the two or three leaders will be found. And then there is the dark horse, still, perhaps, in some university, in America or in a colony, perhaps in a factory or a shop, who may sally forth, swift as a comet, and destroy our estimate; as he writes, the present scribe has at least one such dark horse in his mind. But we must reckon on the known in such a valuation, and it is submitted that we know nothing beyond this list.

The manner in which these men will express themselves must not be determined too absolutely. The literary tradition is changing, and a new one is being made. If the future is to give us a Balzac or a Fielding he will not write like a Balzac or a Fielding: he will use a new style. That is why there is very little hope for those who competently follow the tradition of the past. If a *Madame Bovary* were to be written to-day by a man of thirty it would not be a good book; it would be a piece of literary archaeology. If the seven young men become the men of to-morrow, it will be because they break away from the old traditions, the tradition of aloofness and the tradition of comment. They do not rigidly stand outside the canvas, as did Flaubert and de Maupassant; nor do they obviously intervene as did Thackeray. If they look back at all it is to Dostoevsky and Stendhal, that is to say, they stand midway between the expression of life and the expression of themselves; indeed, they try to express both,

to achieve art by "criticising life;" they attempt to take nature into partnership. Only they do this to a greater or lesser extent; some do little more than exploit themselves, show the world in relation to their own autobiography; others hold up the mirror to life and interpose between picture and object the veil of their prejudice; and one of them is almost a commentator, for his prejudice is so strong as to become a protagonist in his drama. All this is to be expected, for one cannot expect a little group of seven, which enjoys the high honour of having been selected from among fifteen hundred, to be made up of identical entities. Indeed, all must be contrasting persons: if two of them were alike, one would be worthless. And so each one has his devil to exorcise and his guardian-angel to watch over him. They must, each one of them, beware of exploiting themselves overmuch, of becoming dull as they exhaust their own history, of being cold if they draw too thin a strand of temperament across the object which they illumine. But these dangers are only the accidents of a dangerous trade, where a man hazards his soul and may see it grow sick. If we wish to measure these dangers, we must then analyse the men one by one, and it will serve us best to divide them into three groups: self-exploiters, mirror-bearers, and commentators. These are not exact divisions; they overlap on one another; one man denies by one book what he affirms by a second. But, in a very rough way, these divisions will serve: hesitations and contradictions indicate, indeed better than achievement, the tempestuous course of promising youth.

### III

Though, broadly speaking, the seven young men are profoundly interested in themselves, there are four that attach especial importance to the life which has made them what they are. Messrs. Cannan, Walpole, Beresford and Lawrence, capable though they be of standing outside themselves, are, without much doubt, happier when they stand inside. The writer does not know in extreme de-

tail where they were born or what they suffered, any more than he knows when they will die, but it demands no great sagacity to reconstruct, for instance, Mr. Walpole as a man who went to Cambridge, taught in a school, and later wrote books; likewise Mr. Beresford, as one who struggled up against poverty and physical infirmity into a place in the sunshine of letters; Mr. Cannan is still more emphatically interested in the reactions of his own harsh and sensitive temperament, while Mr. Lawrence, a little more puzzling, is very much the lover of life, telling us tales of his mistress. This is not, perhaps, because they take these facts that lie nearest to their hand as the argument of their play. Each one of them has shown by some excursion that he was capable of jerking the earth off its axis, the axis being, with him as with all of us, his own personality. Thus Mr. Cannan, in *Peter Homunculus*, presents in Meredithian-wise, a picture of the development of a very young man, a rather romantic though metallically brilliant young man predestined by nature to have a bad, but very exciting time: that is Mr. Cannan. And, more clearly still, in *Little Brother*, he takes himself up again, himself wondering in Cambridge "what it's all for," as Mr. Wells would say, wondering still more, and still more vainly, when he enters London's cultured circles from which he escapes through an obscure byway of Leicester Square. And then again, in *Round the Corner*, it is, a very little, Mr. Cannan in Manchester, incredulously examining, and through Serge commenting upon the world. Were it not for *Devious Ways* one would be inclined to think that Mr. Cannan had nothing to say except about himself, and indeed, it is disquieting to think that the book which saves him from such a conclusion is inferior to his subjective work. Still, it is not altogether a bad book; it is not the sort of book with which Mr. Cannan will bid for fame, but it represents the streak of detachment which is essential if this author is to show himself able to stand outside his own can-

vas; moreover, in *Round the Corner*, Mr. Cannan was infinitely less limited by himself than he was in his previous books. The praise that has been showered on this novel was a little perfervid and indiscriminate; it was not sufficiently taken into account that the book was a little congested, that the selection of details was not unerring, and that the importation of such a character as Serge laid the author open to the imputation of having recently read *Sanine*; but, all this being said, it is certain that *Round the Corner*, with its accurate characterisation, its atmospheric sense and its diversity, marked a very definite stage in the evolution of Mr. Cannan. Though refusing to accept it as work of the first rank, the writer agrees that it is an evidence of Mr. Cannan's ability to write work of the first rank: he may never write it, but this book is his qualification for entering the race. So far, Mr. Cannan has taken himself too seriously, one might almost say, too dramatically; those sufferings, misunderstandings, isolations and struggles of his youth have been to him too vivid and too significant. For a long time his picture fogged his vision; he could not see himself for himself. But, as chastening age touches him, he appears to view more sanely the epic of his own life and more wholly the epic of the life of others. If he will consent to be yet less the actor and more the spectator, he will probably succeed in becoming the playwright.

Mr. Walpole does not, so definitely as Mr. Cannan, view the world in terms of his own life. It is, no doubt, because his personality is otherwise tinged: he is less angry, less chafed, and it may be that because he is of the softer Southern breed, he has no share in the dour aggressiveness of Mr. Cannan's North country. And there is a variation in the self that Mr. Walpole paints: it is not what he is, or even what he thinks he is, but what he would like to be. In his chief work, by which is meant the most artistic, *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill*, the writer shares with us much of the wistfulness he must have felt in his early

manhood, but Mr. Traill is not Mr. Walpole; if he were, he would have recurred in other novels; he is the simple, delicate, and passionate young man (passionate, that is, in the modest English way), that Mr. Walpole would like to be. This we know because Mr. Walpole loves Traill and sees no weakness in him: now, one may love that which one despises, but that which one admires one must love. No lover can criticise his lady, if his lady she is to remain, and thus, in his incapacity to see aught save charm in his hero, Mr. Walpole indicates the direction of his own desire. Yet, and strangely enough, in *The Prelude to Adventure*, there is a suggestion that Mr. Walpole would be gladly be Dune, haughty and sombre; in *Fortitude*, that he would be Peter Westcott, have his fine courage, his delicacy and his faith. He asks too much in wishing to be Proteus, but, in so doing, he puts forward a claim to the great seats, for he tells us his aspiration rather than his realisation. Indeed, if it were not that *The Prelude to Adventure* is so very much his life in Cambridge, *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill* his career in a little school, *Fortitude* his life under the influence of London's personality, he would not come at all into the class of those men who make copy of their past. And it is a feature of high reedeming value that in *Maradick at Forty*, he should have attempted to make copy of his future, for, again, here is aspiration. Mr. Walpole will succeed if he can increase his detachment and widen the fields which he surveys. Schools and Cambridge: these are tales of little boys and their keepers; literary London: that is the grasshopper and its summer singing. He needs to develop his philosophy toward broader horizons, to embrace business and politics, the commonness of love, and the vital roughness of the world.

#### IV

In Mr. Beresford we discover a closer identity between the man and the mask, though he has written two books where he does not figure, *The Hampdenshire*

*Wonder*, the tale of an incredible child, and *Goslings*, a fantastic commentary upon life. Mr. Beresford is more at his ease when he tells his own tale. In two books, *The Early History of Jacob Stahl*, and *A Candidate for Truth*, Mr. Beresford has exploited himself with extraordinary eloquence; he has the sense of selection, he is not crabbed, and he informs with fine passion those early years through which fleets a splendid woman figure, realised by none other save Mr. Wells. In these books Mr. Beresford shows that he knows love, and isolation, and pain: those other young men with whom we are concerned know these things, too, but hardly one of them so deeply. Mr. Beresford's merit is that he is more ordinary, thus that he is less unreal than the passionate persons his rivals are or would be. Yet, if this were all, it might not be enough, for a tale may be told twice but not more often; if, in the first part of *Goslings*, Mr. Beresford had not shown how closely and incisively he can picture the lower-middle class, analyse its ambitions, sympathise with its hopes, his would be a limited scope. He needs to go further in this direction, to extend his criticism of life through more of those people and more of their fates, while he himself remains outside. He must choose: Jacob Stahl, that is Mr. Beresford, is a charming creature whom one would gladly know; but Jasper Thrale, expounding the world, is not Mr. Beresford, for he is a prig. Mr. Beresford must run on two lines: one for himself alone, and one for the world as he sees it.

Mr. D. H. Lawrence is not in the same class. Once only can he have been autobiographical; either in *The White Peacock*, or in *Sons and Lovers*, for he could evidently not have been, at the same time, the poetic son of a collier and a cultured member of the well-to-do classes in a farming community. Probably it is an open secret that Mr. Lawrence is closer to the Nottingham collier than to the rustic who made hay while others played Bach. But Mr. Lawrence is so little autobiographical

that it does not matter very much whether he be one or the other; it is not his physical self he puts into his books, but the adventures of his temperament. It is an extraordinary temperament, a mixture of rough Northern pride with wistful Northern melancholy. His characters, and this applies to George and Lettice in *The White Peacock*, to Sigmund, in *The Trespasser*, to Paul Morel, Mrs. Morel and Miriam, in *Sons and Lovers*, are always battling with adversity for the sake of their fine hopes, are held up by their pride, and divorced a little from commoner folk by the taste that takes them to Verlaine and Lulli. If it is Mr. Lawrence to whom every flower of the hedge and every feather of the strutting cock cries colour and passionate life, if it is for him that the water-meadows are fragrant and the star-lit nights endless deep, it is not for him that the characters live, but for us: he takes his share, he leaves us ours; he inflames his characters, then allows them to act. Indeed, if no fault were to be found with him on mere literary score, Mr. Lawrence would be more than a man of promise: he would have arrived. But his passion carries him away; he sees too much, shows too much; he analyses too fully, discovers too many elements. It may be urged that no artist can see or analyse too fully. But he can, if he discovers that which is not there. Mr. Lawrence, having found gold in the dross of common men and women, is inclined to infer that there is too much gold in the vulgar. Being convinced of this, he tends to be too urgent, almost hectic; his people are as flames, feeding upon mortal bodies and burning them up. His peril is excessive sensation. He needs some better knowledge of affairs, more intercourse with the cruder rich, with the drab middle-class, so that his brilliant vision may by its dulling become tolerable to meaner eyes. He needs to discover those for whom music hath no charms, and yet are not base in attitude.

Mr. Lawrence, who exploits his life not over-much, affords us a necessary transition between those who are inter-



ested in little else and the second group, Mr. Mackenzie, Mr. Onions and Mr. Swinnerton, who have, with more or less success, tried to stand back as they write. Of these, Mr. Compton Mackenzie is the most interesting because, in three volumes, he has made three new departures: *The Passionate Elopement*, a tale of powder and patches; *Carnival*, a romance of the meaner parts of London and of Charing Cross Road, and lastly *Sinister Street*, where he links up with those who exploit only their experiences. Evidently Mr. Mackenzie believes that a good terrier never shakes a rat twice. Had *Sinister Street* been his first contribution to literature, Mr. Mackenzie would have found his place indicated in the first group, but as he began by standing outside himself it must be assumed that he thought it a pity to let so much good copy go begging and that he came to the legitimate conclusion that he was quite as well entitled to talk about himself as about other people. He is a man difficult of assessment because of his diversity. He has many graces of style, and a capacity which may be dangerous of infusing charm into that which has no charm. He almost makes us forget that the heroine of *Carnival* is a vulgar little Cockney, by tempting us to believe that it might have been otherwise with her. There is a cheapness of sentiment about this Jenny, this Islington columbine, but we must not reproach Mr. Mackenzie for loving his heroine overmuch: too many of his rivals are not loving theirs enough. Indeed, his chief merit is that he finds the beautiful and the lovable more readily than the hideous. His figures can serve as reagents against the ugly heroine and the scamp hero who began to be fashionable twenty years ago. His success, if it comes at all, will be due to his executive rather than to his innately artistic quality, for he often fails to sift his details. In *Sinister Street*, we endure a great congestion of word and interminable catalogues of facts and things. If he has a temperament at all, which the writer believes, it is stifled by the mantle in which he

clothes it. It is not that Mr. Mackenzie knows too much about his characters, for that is not possible, but he tells us too much. He does not give our imagination a chance to work. Yet, his hat is in the ring. If he can prune his efflorescent periods and select among his details, he may, by force of charm, attain much further than his fellows, for he has not chosen to include himself within his work. He will have to include just those things and no others which can give us an illusion of the world.

## V

In direct opposition to Mr. Mackenzie, we find Mr. Onions. While Mr. Mackenzie gives us too much and allows us to give nothing, Mr. Onions gives us hardly anything and expects us to write his novel for him as we read it. There are two strands in his work, one of them fantastic or critical, the other creative. Of the first class are the tales of *Widdershins*, and *The Two Kisses*, a skit on studios and boarding-houses. Even slightly more massive works, such as the love epic of advertisement, *Good Boy Seldom*, and the fierce revelation of disappointment which is in *Little Devil Doubt*, do not quite come into the second class; they are not the stones on which Mr. Onions is to build. They are a destructive criticism of modern life, and criticism, unless it is creative, as it is in Mr. Wells's novels, is a thing of the day, however brilliant it may seem. Mr. Oliver Onions can be judged only on his trilogy, *In Accordance with the Evidence*, *The Debit Account*, and *The Story of Louie*, for these are creative works, threaded and connected; they are an attempt and, on the whole, a very successful one, to take a section of life and to view it from different angles. If the attempt has not completely succeeded, it is perhaps because it was too much. It rests upon close characterisation, a sense of the iron logic of facts and upon atmospheric quality. There is not a young man, and for the matter of that, an old one who is, more than Mr. Onions, capable of parting the souls from

his characters' bodies. There may be autobiography in some of Mr. Onions's work, but there is in his trilogy no more than should colour any man's book.

Yet Mr. Onions has his devil, and it takes the form of a rage against the world, of a hatred that seems to shed a bilious light over his puppets. His strong men are hard, almost brutal, inconsiderate, dominant only by dint of intellect, and arrogant in their dominance; his weak men are craven, lying, incapable of sweetness; and even strong Louie is so haughty as almost to be rude. And all this appears in the very style, so much so that, were it not for the cliché, the writer would quote Buffon. The sentences are tortured as if they had been born in agony; the highly selected detail is reluctant, avaricious, as if Mr. Onions hated giving the world anything. And yet, all this culminates in an impression of extraordinary power: Mr. Onions is the reticent man whose confidence, when earned, is priceless. He lays no pearls before us; he holds them in his half-extended hand for us to take them if we can. A little more tenderness; a little more belief that men can be gentle and women sweet; a little more hope and some pity; and Mr. Onions will arrive.

Of Mr. Swinnerton, who also stands outside his canvas, the writer is not so sure. He made, in *The Casement*, a very subtle, almost elusive picture of the life of the well-to-do when confronted by the realities of life, but did not succeed emphatically enough in the more ponderous effort entitled *The Happy Family*. There he was too uniform, too mechanical, and rather too much bound by literary traditions. But Mr. Swinnerton has a point of view, an attitude toward life; the writer could not define it, but he is conscious of its existence, and in a man of promise that is quite enough. For a man with an individual attitude will make it felt if he has the weapons of style with which to express it. Now Mr. Swinnerton shows very great dexterity in the use of words, felicity of phrase, and discrimination in the

choice of details which will enable him to embody such ideas as he may later on conceive. He has only to fear that he may be mistaken as to the size of his ideas; like Mr. Hugh de Selincourt, he may be too much inclined to take as the plot of a novel an idea and a story in themselves too slender. Under modern publishing conditions he may be compelled to spin out his work: as his tendency is to concentrate, he may find himself so much hampered as to lose the chief charm of his writing, viz., balance. He has shown charm in his earlier work, some power in *The Happy Family*; these two qualities need blending, so that Mr. Swinnerton be no longer two men, but one.

Brief mention must be made of Mr. Perceval Gibbon. Of his novels, one only, *Souls in Bondage*, showed remarkable promise, but his later work, with the exception of a few short stories, was a little disappointing. In his first book there was colour, atmosphere, characterisation and technique, but there was also passion. The passion was not maintained in later years. Other qualities were still there: none better than he can to-day translate the dusty glare or the dank warmth of the tropics, the languor, veiling fire, of its men and women, but the vision is a little exterior. Mr. Gibbon needs to express his point of view, if he has one, to let us see more clearly how he himself stands in relation to the world. This does not apply to Mr. de Selincourt, that cousin of Mr. Swinnerton. His point of view is one of aloof vigour. To a great charm of style he adds selectiveness; in *A Daughter of the Morning*, the characterisation is inwrought, just as in *A Boy's Marriage* it is passionate. And again there is Mr. C. E. Montague, all bathed in the glamour of George Meredith and Mr. Henry James. They are difficult to class, these three; to reject their candidature may be too much, so fine are their qualities; and yet, to inscribe them upon the roll may be undue, for they have not the raw massiveness, the air that one wants to find in boys who are about to be men; they

are too particular, too much inclined to look away from the world and to concentrate on some microscopic section of the soul. To enlarge without loosening, that is what they need to do, and it is no easy matter.

Lastly, and by himself, there is Mr. E. M. Forster, who has been forgotten a little in a hurry, because he has not, since 1910, felt inclined to publish a novel; but he is still one of the young men, while it is not at all certain that he is not "the" young man. Autobiography has had its way with him, a little in *A Room With a View*, and very much more in that tale of schoolmasters, *The Longest Journey*; but it was *Howard's End*, that much criticised work, which achieved the distinction of being popular, though it was of high merit. This marks out Mr. Forster and makes it certain that he can climb Parnassus if he chooses. In *Howard's End* Mr. Forster surveyed the world in particular and also in general; he was together local and cosmic; he was conscious of the little agitations and artificialities of the cultured, of the upthrust of the untaught and of the complacent strength of those who rule. And, over all, hung his own self as the shadow of the wings of a roc darkening the countryside. It is because Mr. Forster has seized a portion of the world and welded it with himself that the essence of him may persist and animate other worlds. His attitude is one of tolerance; he prays that we may not drift too far from the pride of body which is the pride of soul. Mystic athleticism: that seems to be Mr. Forster's message; and as it is essential that the man of to-morrow should be a man of ideas as well as a man of perceptions, it is quite certain that, if Mr. Forster chooses to return to the field, he will establish his claim.

One word as to women. The time has gone when we discriminated between the work of women and of men; to-day, "Lucas Malet," Miss May Sinclair,

Mrs. Sedgwick, Mrs. Edith Wharton, Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes and Mrs. Dudey, must take their chance in the rough and tumble of literary criticism, and the writer does not suggest a comparison between them and the leading men. For this there is a very good reason: the young women of to-day are promising work of an entirely new kind. They have less style than their precursors and more ideas: such women writers as Miss Amber Reeves, Miss Tennyson Jesse, Miss Ivy Low, Miss Bridget MacLagan have produced, so far, very little; they can be indicated as candidates, but much more faintly than their masculine rivals. With the exception of Miss Tennyson Jesse, they write less, and less easily; they are younger at their trade, more erratic, and the writer would not venture to analyse them further on the slight evidence we have of their capacity. It is enough to mention them, and to say that, so far as women are showing indications of approximating to men in literary quality, these are the women who are likely soon to bear the standards of their sex.

To sum up, the writer suggests that the rough classification he has made among the seven young men must not be taken as fixed. Some are more autobiographic than evocative; some are receptive rather than personally active, and yet others have not chosen between the two roads. Yet, taking them as a whole, with the reservation of the possible dark horses, these are evidently the men among whom will be found the two or three who will "somehow," in another ten years, lead English letters. It will be an indefinable "somehow," a compound of intellectual dominance and emotional sway. We shall not have a Bennett for a Bennett, nor a Wells for a Wells, but equivalents of power, and equivalents of significance, who will be intimately in tune with their time and better than any will express it.



# WHAT A GOOD COOK BOOK SHOULD BE\*

BY CALVIN WINTER

It is a curious fact that, in the whole range of publications, about the rarest thing to find is a satisfactory cook book, one that really meets the needs of the people who have occasion to use it. At first sight there seems to be no valid reason for this; why should cookery be a vaguer or more abstruse science than chemistry or mathematics? Why should baking and boiling and frying be harder to expound than addition, subtraction and multiplication? Why should the compounding of a griddle cake be a less intelligible process than the formula for nitro-glycerine? And, of course, the answer is simple enough: the whole trouble with the majority of cook books lies neither in any inherent difficulty of the subject itself, nor in a lack of knowledge on the part of the author or compiler, but simply in a fundamental lack of unity of purpose or method, an absence of any effort to maintain a given standard of simplicity or to reach a certain definite public. Text-books and manuals on almost every other imaginable craft or art are graded: a cook book, like an encyclopedia, aims at omniscience, it would fain satisfy everybody. And the result is that we have the utter anomaly of the same book being used by the ambitious little bride, vainly struggling over incomprehensible terms, the tired "general housework," who secretly pre-

fers her own way of cooking, and the experienced hostess, in search of some new and intricate concoctions. Furthermore, most cook books are in the nature of scrap-books, made up of items gleaned from a hundred different hands and flung together, with little or no attempt at editing. It is small wonder that our grandmothers set such store by their own manuscript collections of recipes, for they at least were old and well-tried friends, couched in terms that had no ambiguity.

Now, if the question were asked: What constitutes a satisfactory cook book? the answer would naturally include a number of requirements. First of all, whatever its scope, it should be so constructed and so indexed that you may find out at once whether or not it contains the item you are seeking. There are few things more exasperating than to seek, let us say, for the recipe for a simple kidney stew, and pursue the elusive chase somewhat after this fashion: "Kidneys: see Veal;" "Veal Kidneys, see Beef Kidneys;" "Beef Kidneys, page 321;" page 321, "Kidneys and Bacon en Brochette." After all, the simple stew that you wanted isn't there, it is nowhere in the book. The most successful device for ready reference is the encyclopedia cook book, that does away with indexes altogether; you turn to the item you want, in its alphabetical position, and it either is there or it isn't.

Secondly, with the exception of the occasional high-priced and pretentious volumes bearing the name of some famous *chef*, a cook book should be written on the assumption that it is destined to be used chiefly by persons knowing little or nothing about cooking, and who are going to look to it for enlightenment. There was once a certain famous professor of mathematics in a New England college, of whose erudition there was no

\*Around-the-World Cook Book. By Mary Louise Barroll. New York: The Century Company.

The Economy Administration Cook Book. By Susie Root Rhodes and Grace Porter Hopkins. Hammond (Ind.): W. B. Conkey Company.

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